Name:

Date:

Nonfiction Book Options

**Directions:** Read through the following blurbs for the nonfiction book options. In the blurbs, you will see a description of the book and the level of difficulty. The difficulty level is measured on a scale of 1-5, with a 1 being easiest and 5 being most challenging. You are not working in groups for this unit; you will read this on your own, so make sure you pick the book that best suits your interests. There is no limit to the number of students who can read a specific book; you will choose the book you want to read, and you will receive that book. You will also have a chance to look over the books in class, so you can see which best fits your interests.

**Option #1: *Jefferson’s Sons* (Kimberly Brubaker Bradley)**

Thomas Jefferson is renowned in United States history for his role in shaping the early laws and traditions of our country. He wrote the Declaration of Independence and was the third President of the United States. But Jefferson also had a dark secret. He had a love affair with one of his slaves, Sally Hemings. In fact, Thomas Jefferson had several children with Hemings. Those children, despite having Jefferson as their father, remained slaves and worked at Monticello, his home. They were forced to keep their father’s identity secret. In this book -- which is *technically* a work of fiction, but because it relies on such robust research, I am considering it nonfiction for this unit -- these children get a chance to reveal what it was like to live both as Jefferson’s son and his slave. ***Difficulty Level: 3.5***

**Option #2: *Unbroken: An Olympian's Journey from Airman to Castaway to Captive***

***-- Young Reader’s Adaptation* (Laura Hillenbrand)**

This is the ultimate survivor’s tale, and it is all true. Louis Zamperini was a teenager who seemed destined for a life of crime, but he was able to turn his life around thanks to his brother, who introduced him to track and field. Zemperini soon became a star runner and represented the United States in the 1936 Olympics, which was held in Nazi Germany. A few years later, Zamperini became an Air Force pilot in World War II. His plane is crashes, and he and his surviving crew members are stranded on a raft in the middle of the ocean for weeks and weeks. They have to survive gunfire, sharks, and near starvation. The story does not end there. Incredibly, there is much more to this man’s life, and his story is the ultimate testament to the endurance of the human spirit. It also happens to be a young reader’s adaptation of one of Mr. Green’s favorite books. ***Difficulty Level: 4.5***

**Option #3: *Temple Grandin: How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World (Sy Montgomery)***

“Almost from the start, Temple’s mom knew that her first child was different.” This is one of the first sentences in this book, and it begins a tremendous journey of a tremendous person. Temple Grandin lived with autism, but she never let it define her or derail her dreams. Instead, she saw her autism as a gift that allowed her to think about problems in a way most other people could not because their brains were wired too traditionally. She used her autism to find ways for farmers and companies to treat their livestock with greater care and humanity. Temple Grandin not only advocated for the fair treatment of animals, she also stood for the fair treatment of those with autism.. At a time when most kids with autism were encouraged to be put into institutions, Temple Grandin showed the world what a person with autism could do if given the chance. **Difficulty Level: 2**

**Option #4: *Samurai Rising* (Pamela S. Turner)**

Yoshitsune was a son to one of the greatest samurai warriors Japan had ever known, but his father made a grave error that cost him his life and led Yoshitsune into exile at a very young age. Originally, he was sent to a temple to learn how to become a Buddhist monk. Yoshitsune had other ideas -- he wanted to become a samurai, just like his father, and avenge his father’s death. This is the story of how a young man abandoned the peaceful path that was paved for him and instead trained to become one of the most famous and dangerous samurai to ever live. **Difficulty level: 4**

**Option #5: *Every Falling Star: The True Story of How I Survived and Escaped North Korea* (Sungju Lee and Susan McClelland)**

The main storyteller in this book, Sungju Lee, tells his story of growing up in North Korea and what he needed to do in order to survive there. Early in his life, Sungju is essentially left to fend for himself on the streets. He befriends a group of boys like him, growing up without a home or family, and they create a “gang” that works together to thieve, beg, and rob in order to survive. Sungju provides us with a glimpse into life in North Korea, a country with no free press, no free elections, and where criticism of the government (even if it is said in private) can land someone in jail or worse. Sungju’s is a story of survival that is especially relevant today, as North Korea becomes an increasingly formidable contributor to global politics. **Difficulty: 3.5**

**Option #6: *Most Dangerous: Daniel Ellsburg and the Secret History of the Vietnam War* (Steve Sheinken)**

The official blurb on the Amazon site is a much better summary of this book than what I could write, so I will simply quote it: “On June 13, 1971, the front page of the New York Times announced the existence of a 7,000-page collection of documents containing a secret history of the Vietnam War. Known as The Pentagon Papers, these files had been commissioned by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Chronicling every action the government had taken in the Vietnam War, they revealed a pattern of deception spanning over twenty years and four presidencies, and forever changed the relationship between American citizens and the politicians claiming to represent their interests.” **Difficulty Level: 3**

**Option #7: *Undefeated: Jim Thorpe and the Carlisle Indian Football Team* (Steve Sheinken)**

In the early days of football, the teams that dominated were the schools serving America’s most privileged students -- Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, and Army, in particular. One school, though, rose through the ranks to become one of America’s most formidable teams: The Carlisle Indian School. In an era when white people stereotyped American Indians as lazy, dim-witted, and savagely violent, a team from a school for Indians came along and completely changed the way football was played. They were tougher and more disciplined than just about anybody, and their style of offense -- which, among other milestones, invented the concept of passing the football -- was created by football mastermind Pop Warner and paved the way for modern football. Warner was the coach, but his prodigy was Jim Thorpe, named the greatest athlete of the first half of the 20th century because he was the greatest football player of his era as well as an Olympic powerhouse in track and field. This is the story of how Warner, Thorpe, and the Carlisle Indians paved a path to dominance. Thorpe has a story that is at times triumphant and at times tragic, but it is terrific to read throughout. **Difficulty Level: 3**

**Option #8: Marley Dias Gets It Done and So Can You** **(Marley Dias)**

Marley Dias is not living the typical life of a middle schooler. She is the creator of the #1000BlackGirlsBooks campaign, which aimed to raise awareness of the lack of diversity in many schools’ curricula. Her idea started with a hashtag and has since become a national phenomenon. Dias’s ideas have been implemented in classrooms across the country, and she has appeared on several national talk shows, the covers of magazines, and obviously, she has published her own book. This is a guide to students interested in activism and sparking change in their community; it provides plenty of wisdom and ideas to propel your ideas into action, all while telling the story of Dias herself and how she got to where she is today. Marley Dias is an inspiration, and her book is a remarkable opportunity to learn how to make a difference. **Difficulty Level: 1**

**Option #9: *The 57 Bus*: The True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime That Changed Their Lives (Dashka Slater)**

Race. Gender. Class. The Criminal Justice System. All of these ideas are interwoven into one story. Sasha is a white, middle class, gender nonconforming teenager who wears a skirt while on the 57 bus coming back from school one day. Because Sasha looked like a boy and was wearing a skirt, Richard, a black teen from a much poorer neighborhood and much tougher upbringing, lit Sasha’s skirt on fire after being egged on by some friends of his. The fire immediately spread and caused Sasha to suffer terrible burns. This quickly became a national news story, and it led to all kinds of divisive reactions from people who heard about it. This book forces readers to face and question a number of assumptions and stereotypes about race and gender, as well as wonder when a person leaves childhood and should be expected to face the consequences of adulthood. **Difficulty Level: 4**

**RANK YOUR CHOICES**

**Now, please fill this out to rank your top choice. You MUST USE A PEN to fill out your choices. It may not be a pencil. Your parent/guardian must sign off on your book choice.**

**Your name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Your class period: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Which book would you like to read?**

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**PARENTS/GUARDIANS: Please sign below**

*By signing your name, you acknowledge that you have read the summaries of your child’s book choices, and you approve of the option they would like to read.*

**Parent/guardian’s signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**